

which is why we must focus on expediting training for the Afghans. And this is what Senators LEVIN, REED, and I heard was wanted and needed by the Afghans themselves during our recent visit.

In the Garmsir District of Helmand Province, we met with more than one hundred local Afghans and tribal elders who insisted they want to independently secure their own population. They realize the need for U.S. troops to help to train and equip the Afghan National Security Forces, and recognized that American assistance is needed to accomplish this mission. But once the Afghans are able to provide security for themselves, they will be ready for us to end our military presence. In the words of the elders—once the Afghan security forces are trained, we will be welcome simply as “guests.” In the meantime, we have to find a way to prioritize training, so Afghans can eventually fill the security vacuums with minimal American assistance.

The third question regarding an effective counterinsurgency strategy is: do we have enough civilians to implement counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, and how can we expedite the deployment and training of civilians?

According to counterinsurgency strategy, once the troops have cleared and held an area with the support of Afghan Security Forces, civilians must partner with Afghans to build. And we need hundreds of additional civilians on the ground to fulfill a wide range of non-military requirements including improvements in agriculture, economic development, essential services, and governance.

We have heard lots of talk in Washington about the need for a “civilian surge” to complement the additional troops President Obama has pledged for Afghanistan this year. Many of those civilians have been hired, and the State Department expects to have nearly 1,000 civilians on the ground in Afghanistan by the end of this year. I support these efforts, but still believe that more must be done to build a stronger civilian capacity in Afghanistan.

During a visit to Camp Atterbury in Indiana last week, I met with 38 civilians deploying to Afghanistan. At Atterbury, civilians train with the military to cultivate an integrated approach and greater unity of mission. Like our soldiers, these civilians volunteer to leave their families behind and put themselves in harm’s way to better the future of Afghanistan. We owe them and their families a debt of gratitude for their service, and we must ensure they have the tools, support, and training they need to succeed.

Civilians serving in Afghanistan from across the interagency are sharing their expertise in everything from agriculture to governance, counter-narcotics, accounting, energy, development, and education. The role of the military and civilians are complementary—one cannot succeed without the

other. This is why military officials including Secretary Gates and General McChrystal are some of the strongest advocates for a deepened civilian commitment to Afghanistan. To succeed in counterinsurgency, we must do everything we can to expedite and increase the recruitment and deployment of qualified civilians.

Finally, when formulating an effective counterinsurgency strategy, we must ask if we have developed a plan for reintegrating low- and mid-level Taliban. I am not suggesting we speak with Mullah Omar or other members of the Taliban leadership, but we must recognize there are many Afghans working with the Taliban for purely economic reasons. One of the striking observations on my two trips was the fact that a primary concern of Afghans is jobs, just like Americans. And if we can offer economic incentives and alternative sources of livelihood—especially with regard to the drug trade—I am hopeful that we can reintegrate some insurgents ready to disavow violence. This will not be quick or easy, but the good news is that reintegration is possible, based largely on the model we successfully used for the Sons of Iraq.

You can see the complexities of determining our mission and objectives are great, and multiple questions remain in developing an effective counterinsurgency strategy for Afghanistan. But these considerations are only half the story.

Once we have reviewed the strategy and mission, we must also consider how our policy in Afghanistan impacts Pakistan. As the President announced on March 27, “the ability of extremists in Pakistan to undermine Afghanistan is proven, while insurgency in Afghanistan feeds instability in Pakistan.” The relationship is clear and U.S. interests are inextricably linked, which is why the President adopted the regional approach coined “Af-Pak.”

In my view, there are four primary challenges in Pakistan that we must consider when formulating our strategy in Afghanistan.

First, Pakistan is a vital security interest because it has become a safe haven for al-Qaida, which has continued to train there and plan for future attacks on Americans. We know this based on the arrest less than three weeks ago of Najibullah Zazi, an Afghan planning a large-scale attack in New York, who is believed to have trained with al-Qaida in Pakistan.

Second, Pakistan has nuclear weapons and the delivery vehicles to use them. Therefore, political instability in Pakistan is not only a regional threat, but a larger global security interest. If Pakistan was destabilized or if control over its nuclear arsenal was compromised, it would pose severe security repercussions. It would be a nightmare scenario to have Pakistan ruled by fundamentalist religious fanatics with “loose nukes” in the hands of al-Qaida or other extremists.

Third, Pakistan’s ongoing tension with India has limited its ability to respond fully to internal threats, such as the Taliban. The Pakistani military continues to see India as its number one threat, and has therefore hesitated to shift its focus from its eastern border to the west. This has improved in recent months since the Pakistani military went into Swat, but any U.S. policy must take into account Pakistani concerns about India.

Fourth, elements of the Pakistani intelligence service, or ISI, have at times allied with the Afghan Taliban. On the one hand, they want to hedge against a total U.S. total withdrawal from Afghanistan, as we did in 1989, or a limited withdrawal as we did in 2003. On the other hand, many in Pakistan worry that an increase of U.S. forces in Afghanistan may push extremists further into Pakistan.

This view was expressed today by the Pakistani Foreign Minister in the Washington Post. Quoted in an editorial, Foreign Minister Qureshi stated, “If the likes of Mullah Omar take over in Afghanistan, it will have serious repercussions for Pakistan . . .” He went on to say that the Taliban’s actions in Afghanistan “. . . will have implications on Pakistan and it will have implications on the region.”

All of these considerations indicate the need for a sustained U.S. commitment to Pakistan, which is why Congress just passed the Kerry-Lugar bill and economic assistance package. This is a \$7.5 billion vote of confidence in the Pakistani people, meant to demonstrate that our commitment to Pakistan is strong and enduring. It is also meant to demonstrate that our interests are not just limited to the border with Afghanistan.

In conclusion, as one can see in the detail and number of questions that I have raised, this reassessment of our Af-Pak strategy is about much more than sending additional U.S. combat troops into Afghanistan. As Senator LEVIN has pointed out, talking about troop levels in Afghanistan is similar to talking about the public option in health care reform. Just as the public option is only one element of the health care debate, U.S. troop levels are just one element of a much broader set of issues in Afghanistan.

The White House is now engaged in the necessary process of evaluating realities on the ground and questioning underlying assumptions. I fully support this process. The questions I raise today are intended to contribute to this ongoing review, so that we may find the right solution.

The stakes are too high for us to carry on business as usual or to ignore the changing dynamics in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is why the President should weigh all perspectives about conditions on the ground and the region, our counterinsurgency strategy, and the way forward in our mission. I fully support the President’s comprehensive approach, and I agree it